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McKayla Brubaker

Quisto Settle

Elizabeth Gregory North

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Viewer Perceptions and Preferences for Farmweek

Abstract

A survey was conducted to determine how frequently viewers watched Farmweek and to determine what their perceptions were through the lens of Uses and Gratifications. Farmweek is a weekly 30-minute news broadcast produced by Mississippi State University Extension Service. Respondents were asked about what audiences they believed the show appealed to, what decisions they have made based on viewing the show, and what topics they wanted to see on the show in the future. Almost 40% of respondents viewed the show weekly. They believed the show presented a positive view of the state and its residents, but responses were not strong for the program appealing to all residents. Respondents reported landscaping and gardening decisions were the most likely to have been influenced by watching the show. The highest number of respondents wanted to see home and garden tips in the future, followed by livestock and animal health practices. Viewing frequency had a statistically significant relationship with respondents' perceptions related to appeals of the show. However, viewing frequency had fewer statistically significant relationships with the types of decisions respondents made based on viewing the show and their preference for future topics. Future research was recommended to broaden the scope of this line of research to other states and other types of media produced by Extension in the country. It was also recommended to research why nonviewers did not watch Farmweek.

Keywords

Agricultural News Program, Mass Media in Extension, Television, Uses and Gratifications Theory, Viewer Perceptions and Preferences

RESEARCH

Viewer Perceptions and Preferences for *Farmweek*

McKayla Brubaker, Quisto Settle, and Elizabeth Gregory North

ABSTRACT

A survey was conducted to determine how frequently viewers watched Farmweek and to determine what their perceptions were through the lens of Uses and Gratifications. Farmweek is a weekly 30-minute news broadcast produced by Mississippi State University Extension Service. Respondents were asked about what audiences they believed the show appealed to, what decisions they have made based on viewing the show, and what topics they wanted to see on the show in the future. Almost 40% of respondents viewed the show weekly. They believed the show presented a positive view of the state and its residents, but responses were not strong for the program appealing to all residents. Respondents reported landscaping and gardening decisions were the most likely to have been influenced by watching the show. The highest number of respondents wanted to see home and garden tips in the future, followed by livestock and animal health practices. Viewing frequency had a statistically significant relationship with respondents' perceptions related to appeals of the show. However, viewing frequency had fewer statistically significant relationships with the types of decisions respondents made based on viewing the show and their preference for future topics. Future research was recommended to broaden the scope of this line of research to other states and other types of media produced by Extension in the country. It was also recommended to research why nonviewers did not watch Farmweek.

KEY WORDS

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INTRODUCTION

Cooperative Extension is often referred to as the "best kept secret" (Debord, 2007, para. 1). Only about one-fourth of the nation's population is aware of Extension and less than 15% of the population is at least somewhat knowledgeable about the organization (Settle, McCarty, Rumble, & Ruth, 2015). Cooperative Extension has been reaching out to the public for more than a century (USDA, 2014), but many Cooperative Extension systems around the country are facing challenges like dwindling budgets and shifting legislative priorities (Varea-Hammond, 2004). Additionally, Extension, like other organizations and government agencies, is faced with the challenge of staying up to date with ever-changing media platforms and communication approaches. The needs and satisfactions of Extension programming vary among Extension and non-Extension users (Boone, Sleichter, Miller, & Breiner, 2007). In order to reach audiences effectively, Extension should strive to match individuals to their media preferences for receiving information (Cartmell, Orr, & Kelemen, 2006). Despite these challenges, Extension programming must function effectively to stay connected with constituents.

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When Extension was first founded in 1914, more than half of the population lived in rural areas, with more than 30% of the workforce being personally involved in agriculture (USDA, 2014). The number of farms decreased in ensuing decades, but as technology advanced, each farm continued to become more efficient in its production. In 2012, less than 2% of the United States population participated in agricultural production (Environmental Protection Agency, 2012). The demographic shift has affected the awareness of Cooperative Extension and its programs (Abrams, Meyers, Irani, & Baker, 2010). Even though the demographic has shifted, Extension continues to be a prominent information source, with an office in or near the nation's more than 3,000 counties (USDA, 2014).

According to Curtis, Veroff, Rizzo, and Beaudoin (2012), "Population characteristics, including age, sex, type of household, race/ethnicity, education, income, and employment, are central to the planning and delivery of most Extension programs. Demographic data helps Extension understand communities and tailor or target effective education and programming," (p. 2). Monaghan, Ott, Wilber, Gouldthorpe, and Racevskis (2013) found that audiences for Extension programming are not consistent and continue to shift demographically and culturally. Despite the need to constantly adapt as an organization, Extension has a well-known history of successfully adapting communication and scholarly resources for diverse audiences (Labelle & Anderson-Wilk, 2011).

One longstanding Extension program is *Farmweek*. *Farmweek* is a weekly 30-minute televised news program that focuses on prominent agricultural topics and issues (Mississippi State University Extension Service, 2015). The show was first broadcast in 1977 (A. Ford, personal communication, January 25, 2016). *Farmweek* is produced by the Office of Agricultural Communications for Mississippi State University Extension Service. The program aims to deliver current farming and consumer news. Each episode is approximately 26 minutes in length, with 50 shows produced annually (Mississippi State University Extension Service, 2015). The program airs on Mississippi Public Broadcasting on Saturdays at 6 p.m. and on Mondays at 6 a.m. The program also airs on RFD-TV on Fridays at 5 p.m. and on Saturdays and Wednesdays at 3 a.m. Past episodes are archived on their webpage and YouTube channel.

A previous study of *Farmweek* identified the number of viewers using random digit dialing, viewers' general impression of the program, and demographic information from the audience (Newman, 1995). At the time of the study, 136, or 13%, of the 1,046 households that were interviewed said that they watched *Farmweek*. Newman said, "using an estimated Mississippi adult population of 1,908,008 for 1995, the best estimate of people who watch *Farmweek* is 248,041" (Newman, 1995, p. 1). The study defined regular viewers as those who watch *Farmweek* more than 2-3 times per month, and Newman estimated their regular viewers to be about 198,681. Of the 136 participants who watched *Farmweek*, 37.5% of respondents watched the program every week, 42.6% watched 2-3 times per month, and 19.9% viewed less than once per month. As a part of the general impression of *Farmweek*, the study looked at decisions made based on *Farmweek* content and topic usefulness. The percent of viewers who indicated that had used *Farmweek* to make a decision was 23.5%. Respondents also indicated the usefulness of the *Farmweek* content as follows:

- 19.1% indicated that market reports were useful,
- 17.6% indicated that the weather was useful,
- 16.2% indicated that the news was useful, and
- 14.0% indicated that features were useful.

The final portion of the *Farmweek* study worked to determine the characteristics of viewers. The typical *Farmweek* viewers in 1995 were married (61.0%), female (55.1%), had at least a high school education (86.4%), and either worked or had a spouse who worked in the agricultural industry (41.2%). In 2014, *Farmweek* evaluators estimated, "approximately 367,149 Mississippi residents viewed *Farmweek* in 2014 compared to 224,654 in 2000" (FleishmanHillard, 2014, p. 4).

Outside of *Farmweek* as an agricultural mass media program, there is a need for a general understanding of both agricultural and non-agricultural audiences' needs and perceptions of information relating to agriculture. If it is known

what types of content audiences prefer and their reasons for selecting programming, it can be used in the future to tailor programming according to the audiences' needs, while achieving agricultural communicator's goals of educating the public. Researchers have identified challenges for Extension, such as a decrease in resources and staff time and availability, shifting legislative priorities, and an increasing demand for evidence of program success (Gregory-North, 2015; Monaghan, Ott, & Wilber, 2013a; Sanagorski, 2014; Seevers, 2010; Varea-Hammond, 2004). Mass media programs like *Farmweek* could mitigate these problems by providing the opportunity to communicate Extension messages more widely and efficiently. Although researchers have identified the importance of educating audiences about agriculture-related topics, limited information is available about their preferences for agricultural content, specifically when looking at the viewer preferences and perceptions of mass media programs in Extension.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The Uses and Gratifications Theory strives to determine people's needs and expectations for their media consumption (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973). The Uses and Gratifications Theory states audience members actively choose media based on their personal needs, with media sources competing for their attention (West & Turner, 2014). The following are the five assumptions of Uses and Gratifications listed by West and Turner (2014). The first assumption is that the audience is active and its media use is goal-oriented. Each audience member brings a different level of involvement to their media use and may not have the same preferences. The second assumption is the initiative in linking need gratification to a specific medium choice rests with the audience member, which theorizes a level of autonomy of the audience member. The third assumption is that the media competes with other sources for need satisfaction. Because of the varying needs and preferences, a variety of media sources have surfaced, creating competition between one another for the audience member's attention. The fourth assumption is that people have enough self-awareness of their media use, interests, and motives to provide researchers with an accurate picture of that use. The fifth assumption is that the value judgments of media content can only be assessed by the audience; because they are choosing to view the content, they are the only ones who can truly place a value on the content or media source.

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of a medium to meet the audience's gratification criteria, researchers need to analyze the needs of the audience members (Katz et al., 1973). Extension should monitor its audience to keep up to date with their viewers' goals, preferences, and needs involved in their media choices. If Extension is not effective at reaching its audience, the viewers will replace Extension information with another outlet that better gratifies their needs. Audiences have multiple media sources competing for their attention, so Extension can easily lose audience members if the audience's needs are not being met. The Uses and Gratifications Theory can be a key lens for identifying how and why certain audiences select certain media. If it is not known how audiences select media, it can be difficult to address how effective programming is at reaching the intended audience and encouraging a specific action or fulfilling a need. As it relates to Extension, the public is going to have trouble identifying that Extension can fulfill their needs if they are unaware of the Extension organization (Settle et al., 2015). *Farmweek* offers an opportunity to broaden awareness of Extension. For *Farmweek* to continue being successful, it needs to meet its target audiences' needs and expectations. Without that, the program risks losing its audience to competing informational sources that better meet the needs of the public.

Television is in more than 99% of all U.S. homes (West & Turner, 2014). According to West and Turner (2014), television is fundamentally different than all other forms of mass media and provides the opportunity to bring dissimilar groups together, such as Extension and Non-Extension users (Boone et al., 2007). As media platforms and consumption preferences change over time, the reinvention of television will be necessary to keep it current in the ever-changing digital age (West & Turner, 2014). The digital age requires that the dissemination of information be purposeful and targeted for its audiences (Cartmell et al., 2006). While times change, Extension needs to know if television is worth the time and effort required, the same as was recommended in 1986 by Lang, Blacklock, and Bossing.

Rockwell and Randall (1987) found that providing farmers and ranchers production and marketing information via television was well accepted as a way to receive timely and relevant information. However, in a study of Iowa corn and

soybean producers' media preferences, Licht and Martin (2007) found that television was the least preferred media channel. Producers did not feel that there were enough agricultural programs shown on television, and the agricultural industry was typically portrayed negatively on television (Licht & Martin, 2007). The representation of agriculture and rural communities portrayed by the mass media forms an impression on non-agricultural viewers, often perpetuating agricultural stereotypes (Specht & Beam, 2015). Even when agriculture is portrayed positively on television, the portrayal is not necessarily accurate (Dietrich, Buck, & Specht, 2015).

In a study by Boone, Sleichter, Miller, and Breiner (2007), television was also not found to be a strong media preference for Extension users. However, Boone et al. (2007) found that mass media may be an effective way to reach non-Extension users. According to Nazari, Bin, and Hassan (2011), "mass media offers effective channels for communicating agricultural messages, which can increase knowledge and influence behavior of audience members" (p. 931). *Farmweek* provides an opportunity to share agricultural information with individuals who may not be reached regularly or at all by traditional Extension efforts. In order to encourage non-Extension users to participate in viewership, Rockwell and Randall (1987) suggested keeping a continuous flow of television programming when gaining an audience base. It is from the continual programming that Extension will grow and attract new audiences (Rockwell & Randall, 1987). Lang et al. (1986) found that viewers of Extension programs frequently used information that was presented as part of those televised programs. Because many of these studies are about 30 years old, there is a need for more recent research involving television preferences of Extension programs to determine if these recommendations still hold true in the media of today. Little research has been conducted on viewers' needs related to mass media Extension programming. There is a need to conduct more research on audiences' media preferences and programming appeals as Extension seeks to better educate populations about agriculture and natural resources. By understanding the target audiences' needs and preferences for media, the Extension Service, as well as other agricultural groups, can tailor their programming to better fit the needs, motivations, and educational goals of current and potential Extension audiences.

PURPOSE AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the study is to understand how *Farmweek* can gratify viewers' needs. Included in these needs are differences in viewers' levels of involvement with *Farmweek*, which would include frequency of content or audience activeness (West & Turner, 2014). A program can only be successful if the needs of the audience are being met, and only the audience can determine those needs based on the tenets of Uses and Gratifications Theory (West & Turner, 2014), which necessitates research to gather information directly from viewers. The specific objectives of the study were to

1. Determine how frequently viewers watched *Farmweek*,
2. Determine viewers' perceptions of *Farmweek* meeting their needs, including program appeal and topic preferences, and
3. The relationship between viewing frequency and responses related to program appeal and topic preferences.

METHODS

This study consisted of a quantitative survey to assess viewership and perceptions of *Farmweek*. A third-party research firm developed the instrument with feedback from Mississippi State University Extension personnel, including an evaluation specialist to help ensure face and content validity. The research firm also implemented the survey. Analysis for this study was done by Mississippi State University researchers to meet the needs of this study.

Respondents were reached one of two ways. The first was through random digit dialing to help represent the entire state. Responses were given over the telephone. Within this group, there were 504 responses, including 94 who watched *Farmweek*. Only viewers of the program were included in this study. Future analysis will address non-viewers' perceptions. The second method was an opt-in method that only targeted current viewers. Respondents were able to

opt in by going to the link that was listed at the end of the *Farmweek* broadcast and in fliers sent to county Extension offices, or by following links to the questionnaire on the *Farmweek's* website, the Mississippi State University Extension Service's website, or the *Farmweek's* Facebook page. The opt-in method yielded 166 more respondents. There were 260 total respondents in the study between both modes of contact.

This study used four sections from the overall questionnaire. Respondents were asked to indicate how frequently they viewed the show during a typical month. Seven items related to the program's appeal to different audiences. Respondents were also asked what types of decisions they have made based on watching *Farmweek* and what topics they would like to see included on *Farmweek* in the future. There were additional sections in the full questionnaire that did not meet the needs of this study, but they included topics that dealt with perceptions of *Farmweek* and Extension. The majority of respondents were male ($n = 164$, 63.1%) and married ($n = 178$, 68.5%). Almost 80% of respondents had at least a high school education, with some college or technical training being the most frequent response ($n = 81$, 31.2%), followed by a bachelor's degree ($n = 71$, 27.3%). The majority of respondents were not in households where anyone worked on a farm ($n = 161$, 61.9%) and a slight majority had no household income depending on the agricultural industry ($n = 132$, 50.8%).

RESULTS

Determine How Frequently Viewers Watched *Farmweek*

Respondents selected how often they watched the program: 38.9% ($n = 100$) of respondents identified themselves as weekly viewers 38.9% ($n = 100$) of respondents viewed the program 2-3 times per month, and 22.2% ($n = 57$) of respondents viewed the show less than once a month.

Determine Viewers' Perceptions of *Farmweek* Meeting Their Needs, Including Program Appeal and Topic Preferences

Respondents answered questions related to the show's appeals to different audience segments (Table 1). Respondents were most likely to completely agree the show presented a positive view of Mississippi and its residents, as well as being for audiences like the respondents. They were less likely to completely agree the show appeal to all Mississippi residents, primarily to those in rural areas, or primarily to those working in agriculture.

Table 1

Respondent Perceptions of Farmweek's Appeal to Audience Segments

	Appeals primarily to farmers or those working in agriculture	Appeals to all residents of MS	Appeals primarily to those living in rural areas	Appeals to older viewers	Is for people like me	Is for the whole family	Presents a positive view of MS and its residents
M	2.92	2.78	2.91	3.06	3.40	3.12	3.68

Note. Scales ranged from 1 = *Completely Disagree* to 4 = *Completely Agree*.

Table 2 shows the types of decisions respondents have made based on watching *Farmweek*. The majority of respondents had made landscaping or gardening decisions (56.9%). Agricultural business decisions were the second-most frequently made decision based on viewing *Farmweek* (36.5%). Only 18.5% of respondents believed the program never influenced their decisions.

Table 2*Types of Decisions Respondents Have Made Based on Viewing Farmweek*

Types of decisions	<i>f</i>	%
Landscaping/gardening	148	56.9
Agricultural business	95	36.5
State travel/vacation	67	25.8
Farm equipment	63	24.2
Home Improvement	60	23.1
Agricultural investing	57	21.9
<i>Farmweek</i> never influenced decisions	48	18.5

Table 3 shows the topics respondents would like to see included in *Farmweek* in the future. Home and garden tips (72.7%) and livestock and animal health practices (70.0%) were the most-desired topics. The only topic included in the survey to not be wanted by a majority of respondents was information on programs where the respondents could volunteer their time (35.4%).

Table 3*Respondents Preferences for Inclusion of Topics on Farmweek in the Future*

Topics	<i>f</i>	%
Home and garden tips	189	72.7
Livestock and animal health practices	182	70.0
Profiles on interesting people from/living in MS	175	67.3
Information on agri-tourism/places where non-farmers can learn about agriculture	165	63.5
Stories/features focusing on community festivals or events in MS	161	61.9
Information on programs where you can volunteer your time	92	35.4

The Relationship Between Viewing Frequency and Responses Related to Program Appeal and Topic Preferences

Table 4 shows the correlations for the study. Kendall's tau was used to describe the relationships because it is a more conservative measure to use when ordinal items are being used in correlations (Field, 2013). There were statistical significant correlations between viewing frequency and agreeing with the following statements: *Farmweek* appeals to all residents of Mississippi ($r_t = -.23$), *Farmweek* presents a positive view of Mississippi and its residents ($r_t = -.23$), *Farmweek* is for the whole family ($r_t = -.28$), and *Farmweek* is for people like me ($r_t = -.32$). This indicated that those who viewed at higher frequencies were more likely to agree with those statements. There were three statistically significant relationships between viewing frequency and types of decisions made based on program content. Those who viewed the program more frequently were more likely to make agricultural business ($r_t = .26$) and farm equipment ($r_t = .15$) decisions, and were less likely to have never made a decision based on *Farmweek* programming ($r_t = -.17$). Correlations were also run between viewing frequency and topics respondents would like to see on *Farmweek*, but the only statistically significant relationship was that those who viewed the show more frequently were interested in profiles of interesting people from or living in Mississippi ($r_t = -.12^*$).

Table 4

Relationship between Viewing Frequency and Appeals Related to Farmweek Decisions Made Based on Program, and Farmweek Topics Preferences

Correlation between viewing frequency and respondent beliefs of <i>Farmweek's</i> appeals to audiences ^a						
Appeals primarily to farmers or those working in agriculture	Appeals to all residents of Mississippi	Appeals primarily to those living in rural areas	Appeals to older viewers	Is for people like me	Is for the whole family	Presents a positive view of Mississippi and its residents
.05	-.23*	-.02	-.04	-.32*	-.28*	-.23*
Correlation between viewing frequency and types of decisions respondents have made based on <i>Farmweek</i> content ^b						
Agricultural business decision	Agricultural investing decision	Local/state travel of vacation decision	Farm equipment purchase decision	Home landscaping or gardening decision	Home improvement decision	Never made a decision based on <i>Farmweek</i> programming
.26*	.12	.07	.15*	.09	.07	-.17
Correlation between viewing frequency and topics respondents would like to see on <i>Farmweek</i> ^b						
Stories or features focusing on community festivals or events in state	Profiles on interesting people from or living in Mississippi	Information on programs where you can volunteer your time	Information on agritourism or places where non-farmers can learn about agriculture	Home and garden tips	Livestock and animal health practices	
-.11	-.12*	-.10	-.05	-.11	-.09	

Note. Viewing frequency coded as 1 = weekly viewers, 2 = viewed 2-3 times per month, and 3 = less than once a month.

^aScale code ranged from 1 = *Completely Disagree* to 4 = *Completely Agree*.

^bCoded as 1= yes and 2 = no

* $p < .05$.

CONCLUSIONS

When looking at viewership, the vast majority of respondents watched at least half the episodes of *Farmweek* each month, with almost reporting 40% watching every episode, indicating *Farmweek's* viewers are not casual viewers. This study found similar results as Newman's 1995 study involving viewing frequency. This indicates that viewers are continually choosing to watch *Farmweek*, indicating the show is gratifying their needs as viewers; otherwise, they most likely would turn to other sources for information that would better fulfill their needs (West & Turner, 2014). In terms of the respondents' perceptions of the program, the only item to receive strong agreement was that the show presented a positive view of Mississippi and its residents, while there was no true consensus to whom respondents believed the show appealed. Included in these middling perceptions of appeals is that the show appeals to all residents, predominantly rural areas, and those in agriculture. Because of the need to appeal to increasingly non-rural audiences (Abrams et al., 2010), the show does not appear to be fully engaging audiences that traditionally could be missed by Extension programming.

Since Newman's study in 1995, the viewer demographics for *Farmweek* have shifted slightly. Today's viewers for *Farmweek* are predominantly married and male. In 1995, 55.1% of viewers were female compared to only 36.9% of current female viewers, although a similar number of viewers indicated that they were married (61% in 1995 vs. 68.5% in 2015; Newman, 1995). Newman found that 36% of viewers (or their spouse) worked on farms, while 38.1% of today's viewers (or their spouse) indicated that they worked on a farm. Despite the slight increase in viewers who worked on the farm, the study found a decrease in viewers that worked in the agricultural industry (not on a farm). 50.8% of current *Farmweek* viewers did not work in the agricultural industry, whereas 58.8% of viewers in 1995 did not work in the agricultural industry. As less than 2 percent of the nation's population is involved in agriculture (Environmental Protection Agency, 2012), it is not surprising that the bulk of *Farmweek's* viewers were not tied directly to production agriculture, which indicates a need for media programming and content that appeals more broadly, to all Mississippi residents, which is important given that respondents did not completely agree that *Farmweek* appealed to all Mississippi residents. As the demographic makeup of the public continues to shift (Monaghan et al., 2013a), it is vital that Extension evaluates its audiences to assess any changing needs and preferences for media programming (Curtis & Beaudoin, 2012), which fits within the scope of the Uses and Gratifications Theory.

As stated by the Uses and Gratifications Theory, audiences prefer content that will meet their needs (West & Turner, 2014). In the case of *Farmweek*, content that was practical in nature was the most likely to gratify the audience. *Farmweek* viewers expressed their interest in gardening and landscaping content. Similarly, the only decision a majority of respondents based on watching *Farmweek* was related to landscaping and gardening. This may reflect the urban and suburban viewer groups' viewing preferences because gardening and landscaping would more likely appeal to a broader audience than traditional agricultural content. This content may help broaden the influence of the program as Extension attempts to reach new audiences with the show given these results and a lack of a relationship between viewing habits and preference for gardening and landscaping as a topic.

Additionally, livestock and animal health practices and profiles of interesting people from the state were the other topics respondents wanted to see on the show. Based on the results, viewers identified information and advice as a need that *Farmweek* was currently fulfilling for its viewers. Other informational content, such as the individual profiles on people from Mississippi, was also important to viewers, though not as strongly indicated by as many respondents as gardening and landscaping topics.

Viewing frequency had more statistically significant relationships related to appeals of the show than for any of its topics. As it relates to the appeals, more-frequent viewers were more likely to believe the show appealed to all residents of the state, for the whole family, and represented a positive view of the state and its residents. This would appear to be logical given that someone viewing the show more frequently would be more likely to perceive the show would gratify others' preferences based on gratifying the individual's preferences. The area for growth would appear to be how the show could broaden its appeal to reach its more casual viewers to improve their viewing frequency. To grow viewing frequency, the preferences of high-frequency and low frequency viewers should be assessed to identify commonalities. Care should be taken to avoid unintentionally alienating the current audience's needs as they strive to increase the gratification of casual viewers to increase viewing frequency.

As it relates to the topics, viewing frequency was at best a low correlation with the topic preferences, indicating there are no real trends in the differences in topic preference between the viewing groups. With gardening tips and animal health practices being preferred by a large majority of respondents, these topic areas would appear to be more advantageous than other topics, such as agritourism or community festivals/events. While agritourism and the community festivals/events were wanted as topics by a majority, an even larger number liked gardening and animal health as topics, indicating a broader appeal, which is important if the program is to reach new audiences. By accounting for the public's uses and needs for agricultural programming through the lens of Uses and Gratifications Theory, *Farmweek* has the opportunity to expand its viewership, therefore, expanding the reach of Mississippi State University Extension Service as it tries to accomplish its mission and educational goals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The first recommendation for the program is to increase focus on general tips and practices. While gardening and landscaping topic was the most likely to be wanted by respondents, animal health was also highly rated, which indicates that one of the needs the show can meet for its audience is providing practical solutions and advice that viewers can apply to their lives. Other topics were also wanted by a majority of respondents and would warrant inclusion in the program at some scale, but tips and advice would still be preferred by a larger portion of the audience and would merit comparatively more focus on the program. While this research did not look at other states and types of media programming, it would not be unreasonable to expect tips and advice to be desired by other Extension audiences. The public is only going to view media content that gratifies its needs, so tailoring content to the audience's indicated needs is important for success (West & Turner, 2014).

The second recommendation relates to audience appeals. Respondents did not have strong beliefs of whether or not the show appealed only to those on farms and in rural areas or if the show appealed to everyone in the state. This indicates *Farmweek* has room to improve in appealing to its target audience. If the show is seeking to expand its audience without losing its current audience, then the show should focus on universal agricultural issues that affect everyone in the state and frame the content in a manner that appeals to everyone in the state. Regardless of which audiences the show targets, *Farmweek* will need to continually re-evaluate how it gratifies audience needs because audience needs and demographics will continue to change as they have for the past century (Monaghan et al., 2013). Extension and its media programs will need to continue to shift to meet the needs of changing audiences as Extension has done in the past century (Labelle et al., 2011)

There were limitations to this study. First, it was only conducted in one state for one media program. Future research should expand the scope of this line of research by duplicating the study for other mass media Extension programming across the country. This can include shorter programs, such as 2- to 3-minute clips, that might be more feasible for Extension systems that are facing dwindling budgets or legislative issues and do not have the ability to produce a 30-minute weekly broadcast (Varea-Hammond, 2004). Related to this, future research can also compare the effectiveness of longer-form programs, such as *Farmweek*, to the shorter programs to see if one form is better suited for meeting audience needs or if the different types of programs gratify audience needs. While this study reports the findings in Mississippi, it cannot be assumed that these findings will be the same in Extension units in every state, especially because Extension and non-Extension viewers' needs, interests, and preferences for content and format may vary from person to person and may differ regionally (Boone et al., 2007; Curtis & Beaudoin, 2012; West & Turner, 2014). Research is needed to address other types of mass media programs, such as podcasts or blogs, in other states to determine other viewers and non-viewers preferences for Extension content and delivery format (Cartmell II et al., 2006). After further research has been completed, viewer perceptions and preferences may be generalized to be used in other Extension units.

The second limitation is that this study compared viewers based on frequency, but it did not address nonviewers. Future research could address how to attract nonviewers to view *Farmweek* and other mass media Extension programming. This could include addressing audience needs, as well as issues affecting nonviewers' awareness of the program.

While not all audiences may prefer Extension content through television, mass media may be an effective way to reach audiences Extension has traditionally missed (Boone et al., 2007), particularly television, which is available in more than 99% of U.S. homes (West & Turner, 2014). Reaching these new audiences is imperative as the population continues to be increasingly urban and suburban, as well as ending the trend of Extension being the "best kept secret" (Debord, 2007, para. 1). News-based programs, such as *Farmweek*, offer the opportunity to provide accurate representations of an industry that are not typically seen on television (Dietrich et al., 2015; Specht & Beam, 2015).

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

McKayla Brubaker is a second year Master's student in Agriculture and Extension Education at Mississippi State University.

Quisto Settle is an Assistant Professor of Agricultural Communications in the School of Human Sciences at Mississippi State University. Quisto has a teaching and extension appointment related to communication and education in agriculture and natural resources. His research focuses on organizational branding.

Elizabeth Gregory North is Head of Agricultural Communications for the Mississippi State University Extension Service. Her expertise focuses on strategic communications planning, organizational branding, marketing communications, advertising, and communications training.